

Message Text

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SUBJECT: JUNE 17 IN EAST BERLIN: QUIET AND CAUTIOUS

1. THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BERLIN UPRISING PASSED
IN EAST BERLIN WITH LITTLE MORE THAN ABUNDANT SUNSHINE,
FRESH PRODUCE AND POLICE SURVEILLANCE. A PARTICULARLY
BRIGHT AND WARM SATURDAY, PERFECT FOR SHOPPING AND
OUTINGS, REDUCED THE SOLEMNITY OF THE OCCASION FOR THE
MASS OF EAST BERLINERS. IN THE MORNING ALEXANDERPLATZ
WAS FILLED WITH NORMAL SHOPPING CROWDS WHO WERE TAKING
ADVANTAGE OF AN ABNORMALLY PLENTIFUL SUPPLY OF FRUITS
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AND VEGETABLES UNDER THE PASSIVE OBSERVATION OF
PLENTIFUL, BUT NOT OVERLY ACTIVE, POLICE AND SECRET
POLICE. IN THE AFTERNOON THE POPULACE, TRUE TO FORM
THIS TIME OF YEAR, MOVED INTO THE KOPENICK WOODS AND
INTO THE SUBURBS FOR SUNSHINE, WATER AND CLEAN AIR.

2. DISCUSSIONS WITH A NUMBER OF EAST BERLINERS REVEALED

A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENTS OF 1953, EVEN AMONG THOSE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER THEM BUT ALSO A FEELING THAT A QUARTER OF A CENTURY IS A LONG TIME TO TRY TO KEEP THE EMBERS OF THAT FIRE WARM AND THAT JUNE 17 NOW BELONGS TO HISTORY.

THESE DISCUSSIONS DEMONSTRATED A GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN STATUS QUO, NO INTEREST IN DISCUSSING THE ABSTRACTION OF GERMAN REUNIFICATION, A REALISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTINUING SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE GDR AND A DOMINATING INTEREST IN PRESENT DAY MATERIAL QUESTIONS RATHER THAN A PREOCCUPATION WITH THE HOPES AND FAILURES OF THE PAST. UNDOUBTEDLY, JUNE 17 IS A VIVID MEMORY FOR FOR MANY EAST GERMANS WHO LIVED THROUGH THE UPRISING; WE OCCASIONALLY HEAR RUMINATIONS AND "COMBAT STORIES" FROM OLDER EAST GERMANS ON THIS SUBJECT. HOWEVER, AMONG THE YOUNGER SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION, WE DETECT NO INTEREST IN EMULATING THE EVENTS OF 1953 OR ANY EXPECTATION THAT THE SOVIET REACTION WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT TODAY.

3. THE REGIME TREATED THE OCCASION WITH CAUTION AND RESTRAINT. BORDER TROOPS AT HELMSTEDT TURNED BACK SEVERAL BUSES OF WEST GERMAN CDU YOUTH WHO WANTED TO VISIT WEST BERLIN FOR THE OCCASION. PROCESSING DELAYS FOR THOSE WESTERNERS ADMITTED TO EAST BERLIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT LONGER THAN USUAL FOR A SATURDAY AND INSPECTIONS PERHAPS MORE THOROUGH. WE ALSO NOTICED THAT AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF PUBLIC EVENTS , SUCH AS FOLK FESTIVALS AND YOUTH MEETINGS, HAD BEEN SCHEDULED FOR THE OCCASION, PROBABLY TO KEEP THE PUBLIC MIND OCCUPIED AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN MANAGEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. POLICE WERE PRESENT IN SIGNIFICANTLY LARGE NUMBERS BUT NOT ENGAGED IN MORE THAN ROUTINE WORK. WE DID NOTICE WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN UNUSUALLY LARGE AMOUNT OF ACTIVITY AT POLICE STATIONS, PERHAPS INDICATING THAT THE POLICE WERE TAKING NO CHANCES THAT YOUTHFUL WEEKEND DRINKING AND HIGH SPIRITS MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND AS HAS HAPPENED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN RECENT MONTHS. WE WERE ALSO ABLE TO OBSERVE THAT PLAINCLOTHES SECRET POLICE WERE VERY ACTIVE IN BACKING UP THE REGULAR POLICE IN THEIR SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES.

4. NOT SURPRISINGLY, GDR MEDIA WERE SILENT ON THE EVENTS OF 1953 BUT HAVE GIVEN CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO RECENT DISTURBANCES IN THE FRG AND TO THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EXECUTION OF THE ROSENBERGS. WATCHERS OF WEST GERMAN

BROADCASTS WERE REMINDED CONSTANTLY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE DATE. BASED ON OUR OBSERVATIONS, HOWEVER, WE WOULD
JUDGE THAT MOST EAST GERMANS WHO ABANDONED THE AGREEABLE
WEATHER OUTDOORS FOR A TELEVISION DID SO FOR THE WORLD
COMPETITION SOCCER MATCHES, NOT TO BE REMINDED OF PAINFUL
MEMORIES OF THE PAST. IF ANYTHING, IN EAST GERMAN EYES
THE LESSON OF BERLIN 1953 SEEMS TO BE THE SAME LESSON AS
BUDAPEST 1956 AND PRAGUE 1968: REALISM ABOUT HOW FAR THEY
CAN RUN ON THE SOVIET LEASH. BOLEN

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